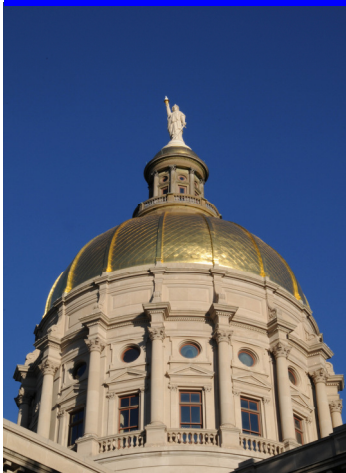


Upper Chamber Report

Raegan Weber, Press Director
Kallarin Richards, Editor in Chief



TOP STORY

Legislative Day 31: Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland Headlines Legislative Day



The Senate welcomes county music star Jennifer Nettles of Sugarland

By Katie Wright

CHAMBER (March 30, 2010) – After a long day of legislative action on Friday, the Senate reconvened with a relatively short calendar and a popular country music star. Jennifer Nettles of the musical group Sugarland was recognized in the Senate Chamber with a resolution authored by Sen. Greg Goggans (R-Douglas). The resolution honored her contributions to the state as a leader in the music industry and an active participant in the 4-H program. Nettles spoke about the 4-H program with fond regard for the affect it had on her life. She learned to speak in front of a crowd and she took her first airplane ride as a result of her activities within the 4-H program.

Sen. Jack Murphy (R-Cumming) asked the Senate to amend legislation limiting drivers' license examinations to be offered only in English. SB 67 passed the Senate and House last year, and today Murphy sought to reverse some of the changes the House made to the bill, which will require any driver's license examination given to a permanent Georgia resident to be written in English only. Sen. George Hooks (D-Americus) was concerned about the effect this legislation may have on seasonal workers as agriculture is such a large part of Georgia's industry. Murphy explained that no seasonal workers will be under the mandates of this legislation.

Sen. Nan Orrock (D-Atlanta) explained that she is against supporting her the measure because it may have a negative affect on Georgia's economic

Continued on Page 2

** Follow the State Senate on Twitter at GASenatePress*



Sen. Jack Murphy debates with Senate members about English-only legislation

development. Murphy countered stating that, as English speakers, we could not go to France or Mexico and take a driver's license examination in our native language; we must take it in French or Spanish. Public safety is also his concern as all of our road signs and hazard signs are written in English. The Senate agreed to amend the measure with a vote of 39-11.

A strong message was sent to the federal government when the Senate passed Sen. Chip Pearson's (R-Dawsonville) resolution explaining any Cap and Trade legislation would be extremely detrimental to Georgians, potentially costing families \$6,800 by 2035. Senate Resolution 801 says that the alleged environmentally friendly legislation fails to con-

sider that a large portion of carbon emissions resulting in global warming are produced from cropland and forest conversion, rather than by the production of energy such as natural gas, coal and oil.

A bill to extend the current capital outlay formula for the Quality Basic Education Act, House Bill 905, was sponsored by Sen. Dan Weber (R-Dunwoody). It is an effort to grant schools more flexibility as they face tremendous budget challenges. The bill received unanimous passage from the Senate.

The Interior Designer Bill, carried by Sen. Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock), passed unanimously out of the Senate. Senate Bill 231 is the result of a multi-year discussion to clearly define that an interior designer is able to draw and consult on drawings for construction permits for areas of a building that has been previously designed by an architect. However, they cannot change load bearing or mechanical construction. Interior designers will also not be able to change a building's outside shell without the approval of an architect. The bill preserves the practice of architecture while allowing interior designers to continue to practice trade. □

Workers Comp Improvements Highlight Insurance & Labor Meeting

By Matt Colvin

CAP 450 (March 30, 2010) - Legislation aimed to enhance Georgia's Worker Compensation Program overwhelmingly passed the Senate Insurance and Labor Committee Wednesday as the Senate begins to evaluate bills and resolutions from the House of Representatives. Rep. Mike Coan (R-Lawrenceville) presented House Bill 1101 to committee members, which would add several key improvements to the state Worker's Comp program and the Self-Insurers Guaranty Trust Fund. Coan said the changes stem from recommendations by the Georgia Worker's Compensation Advisory Committee, a statewide panel of doctors, lawyers, pharmacists and administrators seeking solutions to enhance the worker's comp system in Georgia. Coan noted the main elements of the bill include increased openness and transparency in the



worker's comp process and increased penalties for noncompliance with state laws. The bill was overwhelmingly passed and now heads to the Senate Rules Committee.

Another House bill that would make significant changes to the state Insurers Insolvency Pool was heard by the committee but ultimately failed to pass after no motion was taken. Rep. Carl Rogers (R-Gainesville) presented House Bill 1364, which would allow worker's comp benefits that ended to be covered by the state insolvency pool, which protects the insured from liability as a result of their insurer becoming insolvent, retroactively from passage of the bill. Concerns were raised by insurance representatives on the Constitutionality of the bill which led to non-action on the part of the committee. □

Jace's Law Establishing Home Day Care Provisions Passes the Senate

By Jennifer Kitt

ATLANTA (March 30, 2010) – The Senate on last Friday unanimously passed Sen. Freddie Powell Sims' (D-Albany) bill, which mandates an immediate investigation and closure of Family Home Day Care centers if a child dies under the facility's care. Sen. Sims was inspired to create the legislation (SB 451) after hearing about the death of her four month old constituent Jace Hester.

"When baby Jace passed away, his home day care center reopened the day after his death," said Sims. "Children should not be forced to return to a dangerous situation before a proper investigation is conducted and a state agency deems the facility is safe to reopen."

Under the legislation, if a minor dies at a Family Home Day Care facility it will immediately be closed and the commissioner of the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) will conduct an investi-

gation. If the investigation proves the conditions of the home caused the child's death, the operating license would be revoked.

"These facilities are responsible for the lives of our children and they should be held to the highest level of standards," said Sen. Sims. "Our state has a responsibility to monitor these facilities, and ensure parents they are safe for their children."

Sims worked with Jace's mother, Amanda Hester, over one and a half years to create the bill. They will continue to work together as the bill goes into the House.

"These parents are working hard trying to provide the best life possible for their children. They should not have to worry about their children being cared for in substandard facilities," said Sims. "I will continue to fight for Georgia's working families and the well being of our children."

□

Government Oversight Requires Local Governments to Conduct Annual Audits

By Jennifer Kitt

CAP 125 (March 30, 2010)-The Government Oversight Committee today passed legislation requiring local governments to conduct an annual budget audit at the end of each fiscal year. Rep. Chuck Sims' (R-Ambrose) bill (House Bill 831) gives local governments 180 days following the end of the fis-

cal year to conduct the audit unless there are extenuating circumstances outside of the government's control. Sims said there are dozens of local governments in the state that have been out of compliance with audit requirements for years. The legislation also says that if the audit is not conducted, the Department of Revenue (DOR) will withhold funds as a penalty. Sen. Johnny Grant (R-Milledgeville) presented an amendment that would set the penalty amount at 50 percent of the cost of the audit and the DOR will not be allowed to withhold SPLOST funds. The committee unanimously passed the bill as amended.



Local governments will submit a copy of their budgets to the Carl Vision Institute of Government of the University of Georgia thanks to Rep. Edward Lindsey (R-Atlanta). Under HB 122, any local government with an excess of \$1 million in their annual budget will fall under this leg-

islation, which was supported by GEMA and ACCCG.

Three bills cleaning up previous legislation also passed unanimously. Rep. Wendell Willard's (R-Sandy Springs) legislation to eliminate requirements to distribute court reports (HB 1236) and the Legislative Counsel's Georgia Laws pamphlets (HB 1279) to specific state agencies were created to reduce spending. Rep. Mark Butler (R-Carrollton) drafted HB 1324 to clarify and correct language in the Health and Humans Services' HB 228, which passed last year. □

Legislative Process Dates

Important Dates in the Legislative Process

Introduction - Last day to file and/or 1st Read in Senate.

30th day - last day to introduce General Senate bills and resolutions (even year). [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

30th day - last day to accept General House bills and resolutions. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

39th day - last day to introduce General Senate bills and resolutions (odd year). [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

**Note: Senate bills and resolutions must be filed with the Secretary before 4:00 p.m. to be 1st read on the next legislative day.*

Deadlines for passage in current year

Committee Report Deadlines - Last day to read report. Report submitted to Secretary by convening.

28th day - General Senate bills and resolutions.

38th day - Local Senate bills and resolutions.

38th day - General House bills and resolutions.

40th day - Local House bills and resolutions.

Calendar Management

Calendar in numerical order after 2nd reading of legislation; days 1-5. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

Rules Committee sets the calendar for days 6 - 40. [Rule 4-2.10 (b)]

General Senate Bills and Resolutions

26th day - File with Secretary of the Senate. [Rule 3-1.2 (a)]

27th day - 1st Reading and referral to committee. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

28th day - Committee report read upon convening. (A recommitted bill already 2nd read - report day 29.)

29th day - 2nd Reading. [Rule 4-2.6]

30th day - Passage [Rule 4-2.10 (a)] and immediate transmittal to House. [Rule 4-2.14]

Local Senate Bills and Resolutions

35th day - File with Secretary of the Senate. [3-1.2 (a)]

36th day - 1st Reading and referral to committee. (Cannot pass for 2 days.) [Rule 4-2.4 (c)]

38th day - Favorable report by committee, passage and immediate transmittal to the House. [Rule 4-2.14]

39th day - 2nd Reading in House.

40th day - Favorable report and passage in House.

General House Bills and Resolutions

30th day - Transmitted from House and received by Secretary.

31st day - 1st Reading and referral to committee. [Rule 3-1.2 (b)]

38th day - Favorable report upon convening and 2nd reading. (Applies to days 36 - 38) [Rule 4-2.6]

39th day - Passage. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

40th day - Passage of bills or resolutions tabled day 39; removed from the table on day 40. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]

Local House Bills and Resolutions

39th day - 1st Reading and referral to committee.

40th day - Favorable report by committee and passage.

** Note: On the 30th day and on the last three days of session, bills and resolutions needing action from the House are automatically immediately transmitted. [Rule 4-2.14]*

40th day - Passage of bills or resolutions tabled day 39; removed from the table on day 40. [Rule 4-2.10 (a)]